

ALERT FALSE INDUCED MEMORIES

Summary of the intervention by Claude Delpech, President of the Association Alert False Induced Memories (AFSI), during the conference of the European Federation of Research and Information Centres on Sectarianism (FECRIS), "Cult undue influence in the Field of Health," on March 25, 2023, in Marseilles.

After the lockdowns, where do we stand? For several years, we had not heard about AFSI, and yet victims of therapies for recovered memories are increasingly numerous. Since its creation, more than a thousand families have joined our association, with the same accusations and the same suffering, representing thousands of victims of charlatans.

I will start with a brief reminder of who we are for those who do not know us:

AFSI, Alert False Induced Memories, is a non-profit association established in July 2005 by a group of parents accused by their adult children of abuse or sexual misconduct that allegedly occurred in their early childhood. Abuse of which they had no prior memory and which they "discovered" 20, 30, or even 40 years later during or after sessions of so-called "therapies" based on the search for childhood memories. Abuse that led to false accusations resulting in immediate rupture with their families.

Each family has a different story, but the process is the same for all deviant therapists, often self-proclaimed, who use their power of suggestion to induce, through various techniques of mental manipulation, memories of abuse, maltreatment, and incest in their adult patients. This leads to severe psychological consequences and an alienating dependence on their therapist.

Despite the regulation in May 2010 of the title of psychotherapist, therapists of all kinds have managed to bypass the regulations on the title of psychotherapist (law in 2004, implementing decrees in 2010), and have become today "psych practitioners - practitioners with multiple hats - coaches and masters of all kinds."

Since the creation of AFSI, we have established rules regarding the situation of unfairly accused families that we receive, so that our association members are not confused with gurus or even paedophiles.

For AFSI to accompany these families, it is necessary that:

The victim of induced false memories be at least 25 years old,

She is or has been in therapy, and we can be told with whom (but this is becoming increasingly difficult),

We can, if possible, be told why she started therapy,

Parents talk to their general practitioner, then consult a psychologist or psychiatrist, which they often have already done before making an appointment with us.

The Victims

The primary victims are the accusers of induced false memories, who, when consulting one or more therapists, are unaware that these therapists practice memory recovery techniques. The therapist explains to them that if they are unwell today, it is because they experienced a serious trauma in their childhood. If they do not remember it, he "suggests" that they repressed the event, and that therapy will help them recover their memory.

In recent years, some associations have been formed to recognize "traumatic amnesia." This concept has become very fashionable and is the subject of intense lobbying by its promoters, but it is highly debated by various specialists working on memory.

Session after session, the therapist will then lead the patient to recover her memories, either through hypnosis or through work on dreams or guided imagery, often asking her to note everything that comes to her mind. Many parents have shown us letters from their children where memories have been completely invented; these are fantasies.

Often, the deviant therapist inserts his patient into a group of victims of sexual abuse (real or supposed), where she will only hear horrors supposedly experienced by the participants in their childhood, to reinforce her role as a victim of incest.

For several months, we have found in new accusations the same accounts of rape scenes, described with the same words... which leads us to tell parents that, most likely, their daughter is inserted into a group of victims of incest. Of course, they are unaware of this.

We increasingly see accusatory victims become "therapists" themselves, after minimal training with their own therapist! The latter encourages her to leave everything to become a practitioner of the same method. The therapist may eventually receive "royalties" for the sessions given by his former patient after she has paid for her training.

If about ten years ago, institutional estimates put the number of self-proclaimed therapists at around 5,000, today we could say that there are ten times more, especially since the lockdowns. They took advantage of telecommuting to invade social networks, offering their "therapies" with online sessions paid by credit card... Their resumes are more enticing than others; some claim to be "graduated" when in reality, they have only undergone minimal training to receive a certificate not recognized by institutions.

Charlatan therapists operate like real sectarian gurus:

They seduce to better lure their future victim.

They destroy all the links that connect the victim to her family, friends, sometimes her professional environment, by inducing false memories of abuse and incest...

They then reconstruct a life that the victim believes in but has never been hers in reality; this is why, after the accusations, parents and siblings say, "But we did not live that life."

What they say cannot be questioned.

Nothing must be said about the therapy outside.

The costs of therapy sessions are exorbitant.

It is not easy for the victim to leave the group without threats.

Assistance to Parents of Victims

We accompany these families accused by their child(ren) often for long periods.

Listening and Advice

In individual interviews or during the annual meeting at the General Assembly, our association welcomes and supports people victimized by induced false memories. When we receive families, we try to understand what really happened, why their daughter started therapy, since 9 times out of 10, it is indeed a daughter, often over 35, some over 40 or 50, even up to 60 years old.

We know that once there are accusations, accusing children no longer want to communicate with their parents; any attempt at contact is in vain...

When they ask, we help victims or families to find therapies provided by professionals familiar with induced false memories.

If their child has filed a complaint, or if she has talked about it around her, we direct them to Me Florence Rault, who has supported our association since its creation in 2005. She has followed and defended numerous cases of parents who are members of our association, whose cases have been closed without further action, or have resulted in a dismissal or acquittal. But we also note that several lawyers across France have become interested in the issue of induced false memories and have successfully defended several families. We believe this is due to the media coverage of trials against deviant therapists.

Information and Prevention

We research therapists who induce false memories and their practices, some of which regularly appear in the situations we encounter, such as:

Family Constellations,

Hypnosis and EMDR,

Psych genealogy,

Access Bars,

Personal development in all its forms, which is not therapy, but through which deviant therapists entice their future victims to move towards other practices.

Integrative therapies where several methods are often practiced...

In addition to raising public awareness of the risk of induced false memories in therapy, professional health orders inform their members about the problems of false memories and sectarian drifts. We observe that since the health crisis, a certain number of nurses have become therapists, but do they know about this particular issue?

We hope that exchanges between the Regional Health Agencies (ARS) and victim associations will develop because it is through them that we can help victims and their parents and unmask charlatan therapists. They can respond to our questions regarding the registration in the ADELI register of a particular professional, and we can report deviant therapists and their practices to them.

We call for greater attention from police stations and gendarmeries. When they receive a supposed victim of incest and abuse, they should ask the right questions:

Why are the accusations so late? 20, 30, or even 40 years later?

Have you undergone therapy, with whom? What kind of therapy?

For how long?

The cost of this therapy?

Have you been inserted into a group of people?

Who led this group?

Were you forced into sexual relations? (It happens that the therapist imposes sexual relations on victims or among the members of his group of patients)

Were you prohibited from contacting your family?

The answers to these questions could potentially put the investigator on the trail of a deviant and sectarian therapist.

We also request greater attention from magistrates and specific training at the National School for the Judiciary (ENM) on induced false memories by therapists of all kinds. Family court judges or juvenile judges may particularly face situations of imposed ruptures between grandparents and their grandchildren:

After the accusations, we have seen that victims of charlatans disown their families, and grandchildren are automatically cut off from their grandparents, who often raised them since they were little.

When grandparents ask to see their grandchildren, this is often refused to them: manipulated by the therapist, their children refuse to let the grandchildren see their grandparents from whom they have been separated since the accusations. Often, these grandparents request mediation.

In the media, the pandemic and its consequences have led to several articles or broadcasts on sectarian drifts, especially in the health sector. The issue of induced false memories by deviant therapists is part of this, but there is no article on this subject. We hope that this conference will help bring the victims of therapies for recovered memories back into the spotlight.